

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

I did not watch the Breeder's Cup this year. The California track where the races were held this year has a bad reputation. I have had it with watching horses die on the track. I have been attending the Standardbred races for several years and have not seen a fatality there. I think they are bred tougher. Sadly I was proved right about the chances of a fatality even though I really wanted to be wrong. A horse named Mongolian Groom was fatally injured during the running of the Classic.

— Lisa

Table of Contents

Editorial	1
Reviewer's Notes	1
After Munich	8
Dizzy Afternoons	5
Eclipse News	2
Volcano Observations	3
Worldcon News	8
Writing Issues	4
Book Reviews	
JTM Alexander/Salwen, <i>The Suspect</i>	4
JTM Carreyrou, <i>Bad Blood</i>	3
JTM Kowal, <i>The Calculating Stars</i>	3
Con Reports	
LK Archon 43	5
LK The Imaginarium Convention	6
Random Jottings	2
Letters	9
Sue Burke, Lloyd Daub, Robert S. Kennedy, Timothy Lane, Hugh Lupus, Lloyd Penney, AL du Pisani, George W. Price, Joy V. Smith, Dale Speirs, Taras Wolansky	
Comments are by JTM or LTM	
Trivia:	16
Art:	
Sheryl Birkhead	9, 15
Alexis A. Gilliland	3, 4, 10, 13, 14
Trinlay Khadro	2
Marc Schirmeister	5, 6, 7, 11, 12

Printed on December 17, 2019
 Deadline is **February 1, 2020**

Reviewer's Notes

I made a foolish mistake and it has been haunting me for the past

month. As part of it I have had to pay \$\$\$\$ for home repairs, and I still don't know if they will satisfy the Great Ghods of Home Care. So I have had writing (and I have a new book *almost* done) take second or even third place.

And speaking of insurance, I am now on Medicare. With a generous supplemental policy, courtesy of the retirement system. Having to change the health care coverage everyplace can get annoying, and there are so many doctors.

All which has meant my state of mind has been depressed. There's nothing that seems to work, either.

I got a copy of Gary Corby's *The Singer of Memphis* (2016; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 16 #2) and got to thinking. Since the next one, *Death on Delos* (2017; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 16 #5) came out, there have been no more. And he quit updating his blog and Facebook page then. There is no news of his death. What now?

I refer below to the shift in the membership of the Baker Street Irregulars. Perhaps more to the point is the shift in the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, now the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry. The founderers were scientific types from a representative group, including many SF writers. The current leading members are people known as skeptics.

Perhaps not surprisingly, it has looked around itself and proclaimed victory. For example, they are dismissive of claims of "flying saucer" sightings; yet, listening to Coast to Coast AM brings one across numbers of claimed sightings. Each group exists in its own self-referential sphere.

And indeed, most of the skeptical websites I see are moribund, with few if any postings. About the most active is International Skeptics, which took over the old James Randi Educational Foundation forum, and even there skeptical comments tend to give way to insults, discussions of favorite types of whiskey, and other trivia.

In other venues, the Screw Loose Change blog (about a refutation of the notorious 9/11 Truther video "Loose Change") has not had a posting in over a year. All the while the Truthers boast of unending successes (which never come to anything, so there's that).

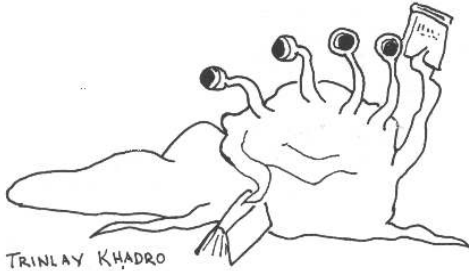
There seems to be an attitude of "Well, that's been debunked, no reason to go any further." Which was why when creationism resurged, the skeptics lazily cited refutations of the early twentieth century creationist George McCready Price, in response to new creationists with different approaches.

Similarly, the approach to the John F. Kennedy assassination has shifted, with people not bothering with the physical evidence, but saying "*cui bono?*" and going from there. Second most popular is new Suppressed Witnesses. That reminds me of Boris Morros's plaint that there seem to have been dozens of people, including many young children, with O. Henry when he died.

— Joe

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



Buy my books. (All available on Amazon.com for quite reasonable prices, except the Hugo-nominated *Heinlein's Children*, which can be bought from NESFA for a reasonable price.)

https://www.amazon.com/-/e/B01BMIC4MU?ref_=pe_1724030_132998070

— Advt.

The latest installment of Norman Spinrad's book review column for *Asimov's*, "On Books", has been taken down from the website, then reposted with an apology from the editor saying that Spinrad does not speak for the magazine. He had decried the shift towards fantasy and away from science fiction in the field. Anyone who had read his essays in the *Patchin Review* should have known.

A file of the complete run of Charles Platt's troublemaking, spirited, fanzine may be found at the British TAFF site:

<https://taff.org.uk/ebooks.php?x=Patchin>

But Spinrad has had trouble selling of late. It's unfortunate, because he has something to say about social issues. It's odd to note that though *Bug Jack Barron* (1969) was considered to have transgressed the bounds of decency (for sexual reasons), the sex in it is quite tame compared to, oh, say, what appears in *I Will Fear No Evil* (1970; NHOL G.166). Personally, I think the book is a striking presentation of the pains of responsibility in the face of evil. "We can all be bought."

Oceania is at war with Eurasia.
Oceania has *always* been at war with Eurasia.

I have been reading *Frozen Hell* (2019; Wildside Press; \$6.99 (Kindle)), the first draft of "Who Goes There?" but it's by an unperson so no point in reviewing it.

The story reads very much like real Antarctic exploration narratives of the period.

Henry Tandey Award to Harry Turtle-dove for "Christmas Truce" (*Asimov's*,

November-December 2019).

[If you look up who Henry Tandey VC was, you will understand.]

The Baker Street Irregulars are having their annual Sherlock Holmes's Birthday BSI Weekend on **January 15-19, 2020**. It looks to be a most interesting event, with dinners, reading of papers, and general socializing.

There has been a paradigm shift in the organization since its founding. When it was established, it was literary types, who in the spirit of the twenties played at the stories being real. Now, it's fans specifically of the stories.

<http://www.bsiweekend.com/>

In Arctic news, Borge Ousland and Mike Horn have completed their Arctic winter ice trek, reaching their support ship the *Lance* at midnight on December 7, with their support crew Bengt Rotmo and Aleksander Gamme, who brought them food, since they were out of supplies. Horn had reported of the sea ice, "[It] is not only shrinking in size, but it has also become younger and thinner in recent years. This causes the ice to break up and move a lot faster than it used to, which are two of the biggest challenges we have encountered so far." They had passed the North Pole in late October.

We are pleased to hear that **Lois McMaster Bujold** will be named a Damon Knight Grand Master by the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America. The presentation will be made at the 2020 SFWA Nebula Conference, which is May 28-31, 2020.

OBITS

Strange cartoonist **Gahan Wilson** died **November 21, 2019** in Scottsdale, Arizona. Born **February 18, 1930** in Evanston, Illinois, Wilson became known for his creepily funny cartoons in venues such as *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, *National Lampoon*, and *Playboy*. I remember noticing how knowledgeable he showed himself about the Canon in his Sherlock Holmes cartoons (admittedly the one where Holmes tells Professor Moriarty that they'll have to keep their little relationship out of Watson's notice is, well, off) and I admired his cartoon series "Click" about boorish tourists going to Mars.

While health issues constrained his output, he still has a formidable body of work both in cartoons and writings.

STAR TREK writer, story editor, and associate producer **Dorothy C. Fontana** (often billed as "D. C. Fontana") died **December 2, 2019** in Los Angeles. Born **March 25, 1939** in Sussex, New Jersey, Fontana went into the writing business in the fifties, met Gene Roddenberry while working for his *The Lieutenant*, and moved into SF when he went on to STAR TREK. She wrote several episodes, notably "Tomorrow Is Yesterday", and moved up to story editor,

where she rewrote several scripts, surviving a revision of Harlan Ellison's "The City on the Edge of Forever".

She found it more convenient to be an independent writer, working on a number of other series, and even a STAR TREK novel, *Vulcan's Glory* (1989). She was inducted into the American Screenwriters Association Hall of Fame — twice!

MONARCHICAL NEWS

René Murat Auberjonois died in Los Angeles on **December 8, 2019**. Born in New York City on **June 1, 1940** to correspondent Ferdinand Auberjonois and Princess Laure Louise Napoléone Eugénie Caroline Murat, he was a descendant of the Bonaparte family and of Joachim Murat, the Napoleonic King of Naples.

He also starred in *Star Trek Deep Space Nine*, the movie version of *M*A*S*H*, and the TV films *The Wild Wild West Revisited* and *More Wild Wild West* — among others.

YOU'RE SO VAIN

by Joe

There will be a solar eclipse on **December 26**, an annular eclipse visible in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Abu Dhabi, Oman, the Indian states of Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu, the Northern, North Central, and Eastern Provinces of Sri Lanka, West Sumatra, Riau, West Kalimantan, North Kalimantan, and East Kalimantan in Indonesia, Sarawak in Malaysia, Singapore, Davao Occidental in the Philippines, Guam, and Rota in the Northern Mariana Islands. The maximum eclipse will be 3 minutes 40 seconds at 1° N., 102° 18' E. in Riau Province, Indonesia. The eclipse is part of Saros 132, which began August 13, 1208 and will end September 25, 2470.

In other news, there was a transit of Mercury on **November 11**. Transits of Mercury take place in May and November; the previous one was May 9, 2016 and the next one will be November 13, 2032.

The Curiosity Mars Rover observed a transit of Mercury on June 3, 2014.

There will be two solar eclipses in 2020. The first will be on **June 21**, an annular eclipse visible in the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Pakistan, India, China, and Taiwan. The eclipse is part of Saros 137, which began May 25, 1389 and will end on June 28, 2633.

The second will be on **December 14**, visible in Arucania Region, Los Ríos Region, and Bío Bío Region of Chile and the Northern Patagonia Region of Argentina. Maximum totality will be 130 seconds, visible at 40° 18' S. 67° 54' W. in Argentina. The eclipse is part of Saros 142, which began April 17, 1624 and

will end June 5, 2904.

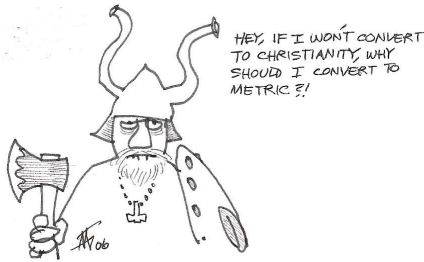
NASA Eclipse website:
<https://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/eclipse.html>

Other useful eclipse websites:

<http://www.hermit.org/Eclipse>

<http://www.eclipse.org.uk/>

AGAINST ME by Joe



The movie title was done by an ignoramus. Krakatoa is **west** of Java.

The mountain had had a catastrophic eruption in prehistoric times, as there was a large crater in the ocean floor. Moreover, the two flanking islands of Verlaten (Sertung) and Lang (Panjang) are apparently remnants of the ancient cone.

There were several eruptions before the cataclysmic 1883 eruption, one of which seems to be related to the Plague of Justinian. The 1883 eruption destroyed most of the main island and the small island of Polish Hat, while forming two temporary islands, Steers and Calmyer.

Underwater eruptions started shortly thereafter, and in 1927 a small volcanic island formed, which was named Anak Krakatau, "Child of Krakatoa". It underwent several large eruptions, and in December of 2018, having built itself to a height of 340 meters, had a collapse, leaving the remnant with a height of 110 meters and generating a tsunami that killed some 437 people.

And now there is the recent eruption of Whakaari (White Island) in New Zealand. The volcano was posted as being hazardous, but not extremely so (the way Anak Krakatau is) so the tourists were acting riskily but presumably knew what they were doing. The fatality count is eight so far, with several more missing.

The worst recorded volcanic eruption was that of Mount Tambora, on Sumbawa Island in Indonesia, in April of 1815, which directly killed 70,000 people and brought about the Year Without a Summer, impacting millions.

Krakatoa, East of Java (1968)
<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0064555/>

Joe Versus the Volcano (1990)
<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0099892/>

AWARDED

Review by Joseph T Major of
THE CALCULATING STARS:

A Lady Astronaut Novel

by Mary Robinette Kowal
(2018; Tor; ISBN 978-0765378385; \$18.99;
Macmillan (Kindle); \$9.99)
2018 Nebula Award for Best Novel
2019 Locus Award for Best Novel
2019 Hugo Award for Best Novel
2019 Sidewise Award for Best Novel

In 1928, after the success of the Northern Expedition, the Kuomintang government of the Republic of China renamed the former Imperial capital "Peiping", "Northern Peace", as it had been briefly called under the Ming. Their capital was Nanking.

After the Communist victory in their civil war, the city, now their capital, resumed the name of "Peking", which is transliterated in the Pinyin transliteration as "Beijing". The ROC continues to call it "Peiping", and the US went along with this until the opening to the PRC.

Therefore, when Kowal has in her story a 1957 news item from "Peiping", she shows a dedication to using the terms as used then that few other authors bother with these days (e.g., a W.E.B. Griffin novel set in China that referred to "Ulaanbaatar" when it would have been called "Ulan Bator" at the time). [Yes I know that Robert Heinlein called it "Peiping" in *Tunnel In the Sky* (1955; G.126).]

The people here could certainly use a tunnel in the sky. Washington DC has been targeted by a meteorite, and far from being the paradise of a ungoverned society that the Neil types would imagine, this is a desperate America, for the meteoric debris presages not just a year without a summer, but a century without them, and glaciers heading south. (And then — **GLOBAL WARMING!!!**)

The response is desperate and devoted; the fulfillment of Tsiolkovsky's comment about how necessary it was for humanity to get off-planet. Elma York (does she have an in-law named Natalie?) is a small but significant part of this effort. She is a computer — that is, someone who does calculations. And then she is chosen to be the Face of the Space Program on the *Watch Mr. Wizard* show. (Again, it's nice to know that Kowal has studied the past and accepts it on its own terms.)

But Elma is intended for bigger and better things. When as a bid for more positive publicity the space program takes on women as astronauts, Elma volunteers, and is taken (even though she is disparagingly told that she was only taken because she had been on *Mr. Wizard*). Nevertheless, she persisted. (Now we need a scene where she inspires a young rock-finding girl named Wendy.)

It helps that she was a WASP (Women Auxiliary Service Pilot) with considerable experience ferrying fighter planes. Besides, the

program no longer needs just test pilots, people (men) capable of calmly reporting what went wrong based on knowledge about a vehicle's equipment.

The program continues. It's worth noting that Elma does get selected, after some stressful training (including having to do a flotation tank test in a bikini), for a moon mission, and she ends up going off planet. Admittedly this is because "The Lady Astronaut of Mars", to which this is a prequel, was published earlier (2012; Tor.com).

The point of departure may be earlier than the date of 1948 given on *uchronia.com*. At least, if the comment about "Shackleton's trip to the North Pole" means anything. By endurance we conquer.

Looking at all those awards, one wonders if anything negative could impact the success of the book. It deserved them.

DROWNING

Review by Joseph T Major of

BAD BLOOD:

Secrets and Lies in a Silicon Valley Startup

by John Carreyrou
(2018; Knopf; ISBN 978-1524731656;
\$27.95; Knopf (Kindle); \$13.99)

From 1935 and for twenty-eight years thereafter, Ruth Beymer Drown, a Los Angeles chiropractor, promoted her Radio Therapy, which could (she said) diagnose people's ailments from blood samples on blotting paper. She was prosecuted for fraud but died before the case could come to trial.

Some things never change.

Elizabeth Anne Holmes was a Silicon Valley wonder; she emulated Steve Jobs in personality and dress, and by the time she was thirty she was the wildly heralded billionaire entrepreneur who at the age of nineteen, in 2003, had founded Theranos, a company which produced diagnostic devices that could take readings from tiny samples of blood and process them from anywhere in the world. Prominent investors poured money into Theranos; famous leaders served on its board of directors. The company had profitable contracts with Safeway and Walgreens to provide its services to their customers. Holmes was worth \$4.5 billion and was the hottest thing in tech.

At present, Elizabeth Holmes is facing trial for fraud. Theranos has been dissolved.

Carreyrou, a writer for the *Wall Street Journal*, recounts a story of amazing hype and incredible abuse. While Holmes made astounding claims for the abilities and employment of Theranos diagnostic devices, within the company she was abusive, demanding, and secretive.

Perhaps more to the point, the device *didn't work*. It used a complex apparatus for treating blood samples for testing that often failed during use. Theranos got around this by having samples sent to their office for testing in a more standard manner.

The corporate culture was in keeping with

the hip trends of Silicon Valley, adhering to the popular buzzwords of corporate organization. This was tempered by Holmes's charming habit of arbitrarily firing people.

Just as the Board of Directors was a sham; since Holmes had drawn up rules that gave her absolute control. People such as George Schultz and Henry Kissinger were no more than adornments, and took no part in corporate governance.

As Theranos increasingly proved unable to deliver on its promises, the corporate backers pulled out. Finally, Holmes and her chief assistant and enabler Ramesh "Sunny" Balwani were considered surplus to current needs. Shortly thereafter, the company followed, and now Holmes and Balwani are facing wire fraud charges.

Holmes made her statement, as it were, by emulating Steve Jobs, down to dressing as he did. While this seems to be a respectable and reputable homage, it has problems.

It should be recalled that John Sculley managed to restore Apple to profitability by terminating all of Jobs's development programs. In response, Jobs set up NeXT, Inc., which promised to build a universally usable computer through such methods as having a single portable optical disk containing the operating system, all programs, and all data. This would have been more popular if the price of a NeXT unit had not been \$50,000. Presumably Jobs learned something by the time Apple bought out NeXT and brought him back. Maybe not, since one factor that contributed to his death was his use of "natural healing" to treat his fatal cancer.

Elizabeth Holmes seems to have learned the wrong thing from all this; she labored to present an image, while failing to produce a substance to support it. The Theranos portable blood test apparatus proved as unworkable and fantastic as Ruth Drown's Radio Therapy. *Bad Blood* is a striking example of journalistic investigation and a tragic story of technological and financial waste.

UNIDOOFUS

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE SUSPECT:

An Olympic Bombing, the FBI, the Media, and Richard Jewell, the Man Caught in the Middle

by Kent Alexander & Kevin Salwen
(2019; Harry N. Abrams;
ISBN 978-1419734625; \$28.00;
Amazon Digital Services; \$13.99)

When in 1996 the Atlanta Olympics was attacked by a cruel and vicious bomber, the Atlanta office of the FBI carried out a vigorous and thorough investigation. Speedily focusing on a top suspect, the office under the direction of Special Agent Don Johnson carried out meticulous searches of his residence. They noted his long career in law enforcement with his constant posing as a super-cop, prepared for every eventuality. He fit their pro-

file, the product of the FBI's crack team of professional criminal profilers. Special Agent Johnson coordinated efforts with the media, bringing pressure on the suspect with targeted releases of information.

Surely, one would think, after all this effort the suspect would confess and be convicted. The families of the dead, the injured and their relatives, would have closure, and the FBI would rack up another triumph.

He didn't do it? What has that got to do with anything?

The Suspect is a detailed examination of the Atlanta Centennial Park bombing. It begins with a description of how the 1996 Summer Olympics was brought to Atlanta. The preparations were elaborate and detailed. Relevantly, a wasted slum area was turned into Centennial Park, a beautiful green space that would sustain the city long after the Olympics were over.

For Richard Allensworth Jewell it was a final chance. He had longed to be a law enforcement officer; he had vigorously pursued training and always worked the extra mile. His fellow officers found his obsession with police gear to be perhaps absurd (he had so much that the car browned out when he tried to drive with all of it turned on). And, he was sloppy, forever having small accidents and making other slipups that ended his career with one small police force after another. Being a security guard at the Atlanta Olympics was a last hope.

And he was meticulous, going over his area of assignment regularly and carefully. So it was that when just after midnight on July 27, he noticed an abandoned pack under a bench. Jewell followed procedure, he informed his superiors and joined with other security guards in clearing the area. The bomb detonated, killing one spectator and leading to the fatal heart attack of another, and wounding 111 people.

At first, Jewell was the hero of the day. But then a more sinister mode supervened. All that cop work indicated that he wanted to be a law-enforcement hero. Planting a bomb himself, then "discovering" it, would be the perfect way to do so.

And so the FBI Atlanta Office began its investigation. Jewell was questioned. It grew more vigorous; the press was brought in to help intimidate him into surrendering and confessing, while the apartment where he lived with his mother was repeatedly searched. (They found no traces of bombmaking but that did not stop them.)

Jewell was under pressure from not only the local media, such as the *Journal-Constitution*, but the national media. He was referred to contemptuously, as a foolish man who wanted to play Master Cop.

Meanwhile, the *real* bomber fretted and plotted. Eric Robert Rudolph had been on the fringes of various movements and developed a profound hatred for society. He had built a powerful and deadly weapon, and attacked the "global" Olympics. And yet someone else was blamed. When he tried again, targeting other

venues (an abortion clinic), he got a little more attention.

Finally, the implacable arm of the law gave up. In a strange condescension, the top echelons of the U.S. justice system exonerated Jewell.

Over the next few years, Jewell tried to rebuild his life. He married. He met a Japanese man who had been similarly targeted and pilloried, for a sarin gas attack conducted by Aum Shinrikyo; their shared experience outweighed cultural difficulties. He even finally got a permanent job in law enforcement.

Eric Robert Rudolph had fled to the woods. Eventually, he was caught dumpster-diving. He was speedily convicted and now is serving life without parole in a Supermax prison. Jewell was present at the sentencing, albeit in a holding room.

Two years afterwards, Jewell died. He had sued the various media outlets that had put him on trial, and won various settlements from most of them. The harassment likely did not help his health. And even now he is called a shake-down artist. Where could he go to get his reputation back?



For more on this see Clint Eastwood's new movie, starring Paul Walter Hauser as the title character, *Richard Jewell* (2019):

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3513548/>

WRITING ISSUES

by Lisa

The library has a book titled *Weird Hauntings*. I blinked at this title. It made me want to know exactly what is a normal haunting. I asked several of the reference librarians but they had no answer for my question. Sigh. I filed it under life's unanswered minor questions but I always still wonder about this during Halloween.

Novel writing month is coming up. During this crazy people set down and do their best to write at least 50,000 words in one month. Against all better judgment I have decided to try this. I don't think I have a snowball's chance in the desert because the closest I have ever come to achieving this goal was 36,000 words. Nevertheless I need something to shake

myself out of my writing doldrums. And so I will take some time at the library and decide on a character.

DIZZY AFTERNOONS

by Taral Wayne

Remember the good ol' days of the 1990s? It doesn't seem all that long ago, either, when we were tuning into *Darkwing Duck*, *Aladdin*, *Duck Tales*, *Rescue Rangers*, *Gummi Bears*, *Tail Spin* and the others. They were fresh, they were good, and they were popular. And then they were gone, except in re-runs. The span of time in which these programs hit their stride and rode the resurgence of TV animation of the '90s, only lasted seven years ... after which they were consigned to the dust heap of re-run history. That's show business for ya...

Of course, we watched these programs over and over, *because we could!* All the same, it was different once you understood that there would be no more *new* episodes. Instead, there would be *Phineas and Ferb*, and *Brandy & Mr. Whiskers*. I suppose those were alright in their own way, but already there was a plastic quality to the product, that was no longer as inspiring as the Disney Afternoon. So we continued to watch the re-runs. But then, inevitably, they too were swept away by the inevitable development of new properties that could be marketed for coveted shelf space at Toys-R-Us.

Did anyone *really* expect to see the Disney Afternoon again?

Of course, we did have videotape releases, but they were mere palliative efforts intended to sell a few episodes for maximized bottom lines. We were grateful for half-a-dozen volumes, each with only two or three episodes, because that was all that was available. The rest remained inaccessible, seemingly forever.

But videotape had its day, and then it was gone as well.

In the new DVD millennium, the sun unexpectedly rose on The Disney Afternoon once again. The volumes were not cheap, but at least you would watch entire seasons in a single set. Oh, wait ... not so fast. It seems that sales may not have been quite as brisk as Disney had hoped, because in most cases there were only two volumes of a show ever released, although three or more might easily have been, if Disney had thought it worthwhile. Apparently, they didn't.

Still, it was delightful to be able to watch most of the Disney Afternoon classics as they were meant to be seen. And, to be truthful ... perhaps two volumes were enough in most cases. It was easy to get too much of something like *Goof Troop*.

Because of the cost of the DVDs in their original releases, I was unwilling to buy them. But they have all been recently been re-released at Wal-Mart, and at \$10 a pop I was finally able to buy the remaining volumes. I

was able to add *Darkwing Duck*, *Tail Spin*, *Rescue Rangers*, and *Goof Troop* to my collection of noteworthy animation. Since it was easily my *least* favourite of the Disney shows, I was a bit reluctant to add *Goof Troop* to the bag. Still, why not? At the price of a couple of slices of pizza, I bought them as well ... and I don't quite regret them.

I wish I had seen episodes of *Aladdin* at Wal-Mart, but they were unaccountably missing. A quick online search revealed that mass-market DVDs were never released. Cheap bastards! They sensed bigger profits in an even more exploitative digital market. So, fuck *Aladdin*. Robin Williams is dead anyway.

For me, the real star in the Disney Afternoon was *Darkwing Duck*. It was funny, it shared an intricate background full of fascinating characters, and was one of the few superhero spoofs that was genuinely entertaining ... not merely camp. *Darkwing* holds for me just as well as it ever did.

I'm not so certain of some of the others, which I suspect are showing the signs of their times more poignantly. *Goof Troop* let me down more than I expected, considering that I regarded the two movies highly. *Rescue Rangers* also disappoints for some reason. Maybe I just don't care for stories about little animal characters all that much? As for *Tail Spin*, I still have high hopes. Mind you, Baloo was a fucking putz, but it had everything I could want in a Disney cartoon, and those DVDs are in the queue for watching as soon as I've done with *Pinky and the Brain*.

But that's another pair of test subjects, and another studio.



ARCHON 43

Con Report by Leigh Kimmel

Archon is the St. Louis area's long-running science fiction convention, which over the years has increasingly taken some of the aspects of a media convention. This year it was held over the weekend of October 4-6, 2019 at the Gateway

Convention Center and DoubleTree Hotel in Collinsville, Illinois, one of the Metro East suburbs of St. Louis.

Because I wanted to visit my dad in central Illinois and because load-in for the convention starts very early Friday morning, we left home on Wednesday and stayed the night at my dad's place. I was able to carry our last few personal belongings out relatively quickly and we hit the road west in good time. We stopped in Champaign to make two shopping visits, and still got to my dad's place in time for supper. I also got laundry done and food cooked for the weekend before turning in for the night.

On Thursday we got up and joined my dad for breakfast, then carried our stuff back out to the van for the next leg of the journey. The traffic wasn't that bad on I-55, but we did have to deal with fairly strong crosswinds most of the way. We got to Collinsville early enough that we decided to go to Walmart before checking into the hotel. However, that Walmart didn't have a gas station, so we ended up taking a long side trip and finally returning to the QuikTrip right by Walmart to get gas.

However, by the time we got done with all that, we could check into our room without any hassle. My biggest problem was the sheer number of trips I had to make to get all our personal belongings into our room, since some of the stuff that needed to go in first didn't make a good, stable load on the bell cart.

Once I was done, I got my computer out and settled in to make some final blog posts for the weekend, arranging them to auto-load each day. Then we headed over to the Gateway Center to scope out the dealers' room and get our badges. While we were waiting, I did some work on a book review. However, I found that the stories in the anthology hadn't produced that compelling of memories in my mind, so it was tough going.

When we returned to the hotel, we had supper. Our friends got their belongings into the room, and I did a little more writing, this time on fiction, before turning in for the night.

On Friday we got up bright and early to have the hotel's complimentary breakfast before we headed over to the Gateway Center so we could be ready the moment they opened the roll-up door and let us in. I was getting merchandise out so that we could get at our cart, but as it turned out, my husband was able to get one of the convention center's flatbed carts, which did simplify the process of loading in. However, our friends seemed to have gotten lost on the way between the hotel and the convention center, and didn't show up to help us until we'd gotten several loads in. Although this was annoying, I had to consider that one of our friends was under the weather as a result of a nasty head cold, and really wasn't going to be up to much physical work.

In fact, once we got everything in and it became increasingly obvious that she was not going to be up to helping us build structures and work merchandise into them, I told her to just go back to the room and convalesce so that

she would feel up to working when it was time to load out. Then I focused on getting everything done as quickly as possible without making a mess of it. However, as the time to open to the general membership approached, we just grabbed everything and got it behind our tables so we wouldn't get yelled at about having stuff in the aisles. Although there were some things I would've liked to have gotten out, we decided to just go with what we had up and sell what we could.

Sales were fairly decent for a smaller convention, although I had to consciously reduce my expectations that had been set by the really huge comic and anime conventions we do. However, I was astonished at getting several sizable hardcover book sales. Usually we do well to sell one or two hardcovers throughout the weekend, but we had several go in those four hours.

By the time the doors closed, my legs and feet were in misery. There was no way I was going to be able to haul our little cart all the way back to the van and set our personal belongings in it, then walk all the way back inside for the art show. So I ended up taking everything in with me and putting it in the checked-bags area while I got some of the refreshments, including one of the mini-cheesecakes. Once I probably would've taken one of each variety, but now that I have medical reasons to watch my diet, I restricted myself to one and had more of the little chicken bites and the meatballs for protein.

Then we headed back over to the hotel for the evening. We had our actual supper, and I tried to get a little more writing done before we turned in for the night.

On Saturday we got up early and had the hotel's complimentary breakfast. Then we headed over to the convention center to finish setting up properly. In particular, we wanted to get our signs out, but there were also some items of merchandise I wanted to get out.

When the doors first opened, things were really slow. However, after an hour or so, traffic really started picking up and we began getting serious sales. We sold so many hardcovers that I ran out of hardcover back stock, and discovered that we didn't have any second copies of things we didn't already have in first level. So when we sold more hardcovers, I had to rearrange the books in the boxes to prevent unsightly gaps.

During the afternoon, my feet and knees began to have real problems with my standing on them for so long. When it got too bad, I'd sit down to give them some rest, only to be pressured to stand up again in a matter of minutes. Finally my feet started cramping to the point I thought I'd literally fall down if I couldn't stay seated until they recovered. I finally texted our friends and asked them to come help us before I collapsed completely.

We managed to get through to the time the dealers' room closed, and then we got back out to the van and drove back to the hotel. After supper, I pulled out our plastic basin and

soaked my feet until they were no longer in anguish. However, I was simply too tired to do the book reviews like I'd planned. I did well to get some fiction written before we turned in for the night, very glad to be able to put our feet up on some spare pillows.

On Sunday we got up and had the hotel's complimentary breakfast. Then we got our stuff out of the room and got checked out. It took longer than we'd expected, and we were late getting to the convention center. I'd thought I'd finally get to look around the dealers' room, but then my husband had a nasty case of digestive upset, and dealing with the resultant problems pretty much took the rest of our prep period. So I had to start dealing with customers right away, and never got to look around.

Sales were slow at first, but they started picking up right about the time we needed to start packing. However, we never had any of the huge last-minute paperback sales where someone buys a whole pile of books and I have to scramble to get them marked off and second copies moved into place. In fact, we sold relatively few paperbacks all weekend long, which was remarkable compared to how many hardcovers moved.

When the doors closed and it was time to load out, we assembled our whole team and secured a flatbed cart. I brought in the t-shirt boxes and some other empty boxes that we didn't have room for under our tables. However, we didn't get as good of a job packing the t-shirts, because we ended up with a stack that had no place, and I had to scramble to find a place for them.

Actually getting loaded went fairly quickly with good help, and I told our friends who were ill to get home safely and rest so they could feel better. For a change, we were not the last people to leave, even with talking to the dealers' room coordinator about next year's show. We headed back north to my dad's place, and at first I didn't seem to be doing that badly. But after we passed the closed rest area just north of Springfield, I started getting super sleepy. It was all I could do to hold my eyes open part of the time, and I was extremely glad to pull into the driveway and power down.

We carried in the essentials and had supper. We visited a little with Dad, who decided to turn in early, and I did some laundry. I also got a little writing done.

On Monday we slept in, and not having to get up to an alarm was quite welcome. However, I slept so soundly that I didn't take an important prescription until I got up, so I had to shower first and then eat breakfast. As it turned out, it worked out just fine because my dad was also sleeping in, and delaying breakfast made it possible for him to join us.

Then I did another load of laundry and tried to carry as much as possible of our personal belongings back out to the van. Then we had lunch and carried out the last few things before taking off.

At first I didn't feel all that tired, and was still going well when we crossed the state line.

However, as we got to Indianapolis, I started feeling tired. I was able to get the deposit made at the branch of our bank in Brownsburg, but as we drove across town, I started really struggling to stay awake. I was very glad to get home, and I just carried in the essentials before taking a nap. Only after I felt more awake did I bring in the rest of our personal belongings and call the trip finished.

THE IMAGINARIUM CONVENTION

Con Report by Leigh Kimmel

The Imaginarium Convention is a small writers' convention held each year in Louisville, Kentucky. It is run by Seven Stars Press, and has no connection whatsoever to the Imaginarium Agency that produces big conventions like Indiana Comic Con and Tampa Bay Comic Con. This year it was held over the weekend of October 11-13, 2019 at the Ramada Inn and Triple Crown Convention Center, where ConGlomeration had been held for so many years.

We found out about it almost by accident when doing a random online search. The description made it look like a good market for books, and since it was the weekend right after Archon, we'd be able to use the same merchandise, making it look like an even better deal.

However, since it was still an unknown, we decided not to go down there until Thursday morning, since load-in didn't start until Thursday evening and the drive from Indianapolis isn't that long. We also decided to use loyalty-program points to buy our hotel nights, so that we didn't have the expense. As a result, we had to split our stay, checking out of one hotel on Sunday morning, then going to the other hotel (from a different franchise) Sunday evening after load-out and staying just one night.

We hit the road right after breakfast on Thursday and actually made fairly good time going down, although the building at the second rest stop was unaccountably closed. I'm thinking they had some problem with their waste treatment facility, because they had a row of porta-potties set up right in front of the entrance to the building.

I was doing fairly well until we were going across Louisville on I-64 to avoid the toll bridge and get to our hotel. I was very glad to get to the hotel and be able to rest a little. However, the room wasn't going to be ready until 3PM, so I decided to head over to Sam's Club while my husband waited for the room to be ready.

When I came back, he had just finished checking in. I got a key and started carrying stuff into the room. We got it in fairly quickly and even had some time to sit around and relax before we needed to go over to the convention center to start loading in.

We went a little early, which gave me a chance to see just how badly the place had deteriorated since we were last there for ConGlomeration in 2016. They'd apparently lost

their air conditioner, and had a makeshift one set up by removing one of the emergency doors, replacing it with a plywood panel with holes cut in it, and running hose from it to a unit set outside. Needless to say, it created a region that got the full blast of freezing air, and other areas would probably be hot.

There were also issues with the restrooms. Most notably, the soap and paper towel dispensers were never refilled, and while there was some liquid soap in bottles on the sinks, we were left entirely dependent upon the electric hand driers of questionable reliability. I heard the men's room was even worse, with the handicap-accessible stall out of order.

At 5PM we finally got our table assignments and were allowed to load in our merchandise. I'd managed to get the van in a parking spot right by the front doors, since they weren't letting us use the roll-up door (unlike ConGlomeration), so I probably had the closest possible trip short of parking under the awning. I tried to carry everything in as rapidly as possible, but even with them letting us run late, I still didn't have the big gridwall in when they finally let us know they needed to close things for the night.

So we headed back to our hotel to have supper and wind down before going to bed. I did some writing, and we called it a day.

On Friday we got up and had the hotel's complimentary breakfast. Then we headed back over to the convention center to finish hauling in the grid wall and get everything set up. I took a number of empty boxes back out to the van, since we had woefully inadequate backspace for them all. We actually managed to be pretty much set up when the doors opened to the general membership.

However, we had almost no foot traffic to speak of. I did see an old friend from ConGlomeration, who made our very first sale of the day. We talked about various things going on in the Louisville area, and how badly the place had gone downhill since ConGlomeration was held there.

After the doors closed for the evening, we headed back to the hotel and got a good soak in their hot tub. It was so steaming hot that I couldn't sit in it the whole time and ended up on the edge, soaking my feet.

Then we had supper and struggled with the hotel's Internet, which had suddenly turned flaky on us. We were pretty sure it was their gateway giving them problems, and nothing would be fixed until it was properly reset. I finally gave up and pulled out a novelette I'd originally written for an anthology since canceled and set to rewriting it for indie publication.

On Saturday we had the hotel's complimentary breakfast, this time with bacon, and headed back to the convention center. When we walked into the dealers' room, the place was like a walk-in refrigerator (and I know whereof I speak, having way too much experience retrieving stuff from walk-in refrigerators while working fast food). Apparently the

makeshift air conditioner had been left running overnight, even as the cold front came through and the temperature dropped thirty degrees. Worse, it had no thermostatic control, so they had to send someone out to actually turn it off — and it was being disagreeable about turning off until they completely cut the power. So I just left my coat on for most of the morning, and never did take off my sweatshirt to show off the t-shirt I was wearing.



I have a good reason to believe that the heat in the dealers' room wasn't working either, because it never really warmed up, even after the makeshift air conditioner was turned off and blocked off. Some heat filtered in from the atrium through the open doors, but it never really warmed the place up. I certainly would not have wanted to be in there in really cold weather.

I'd been told that sales would pick up on Saturday, and they did — but that was only in comparison to the paltry performance of Friday. By mid-afternoon it was becoming increasingly obvious that this convention had been a big mistake and we'd be lucky to break even, and that with our expenses reduced to the bare minimum by spending points instead of money on our hotel stay. I had so little to do that I ended up finishing reading an e-book I'd promised to review, read two other, shorter e-books,

and then began a longer one.

However, we did have one definite bright spot in the otherwise miserable day when Joe and Lisa Major dropped by. Joe and I talked some about our respective writing projects, which is always enjoyable, even if both of us have been struggling with difficulties that have slowed our progress on them. And I definitely have a motivation to get back to actually producing finished prose and getting it up on KDP again.

After the dealers room closed for the night, we headed back to the hotel and soaked in the hot tub. This time they'd turned the thermostat down a little, but it was still quite warm. After supper, I took some of our things out to the van in order to speed our departure in the morning. Then I turned on our hotspot and paid a couple of forgotten bills, before pulling out my novelette and getting back to the struggle of rewriting the beginning.

On Sunday we had the hotel's complimentary breakfast, then loaded out our remaining personal belongings and checked out. Then we headed back over to the convention center and immediately commenced the task of packing our merchandise. After the extremely poor sales we'd had on Saturday, we saw no reason to linger.

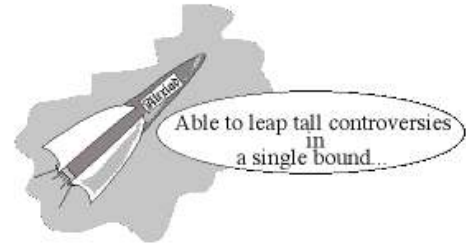
We stopped briefly before lunch, since we weren't really ready to bring in the boxes for the t-shirts. But after lunch I went out and collected them. We had a few last-minute sales, but nothing nearly big enough to close the gap to profitable. Once we got the t-shirts boxed and the big gridwall down, I started hauling merchandise out. I took the first trip over to where we'd parked the van, but it was an extremely awkward spot on a slope, so at the first opportunity I moved the van under the awning to shorten my trips. We weren't going to be coming back, so I really didn't care any more whether we were supposed to do that.

We had some help with the heaviest things, but even so, it was almost dark by the time we got the last items into the van and were ready to head off. I'd heard there was a mess in the women's restroom, so I decided to wait until we got to the other hotel to go to the restroom, which made the final loading a little less fun than I would have liked.

The drive up to the hotel proved longer than I'd expected, and I was very glad that this was a fancier hotel which had restrooms in the lobby. Once we were checked in, I got our critical belongings into our room and we settled in for the night. It was a really nice room, but the controls for the motorized roller blinds defeated us and we finally had to call the front desk and get help lowering the blackout curtain so we'd have darkness when we turned in for the night. It was a bit embarrassing, but he was really nice about it.

On Monday we got up and had the breakfast, which might not have been as fancy as one place where we've stayed, but was certainly very nice. Then it was time to carry our belongings back out and hit the road. Because

Letters, we get letters



From: **Dale Speirs** October 17, 2019
 Calgary, Alberta, CANADA
opuntia57@hotmail.com

Re: comments about the decline of apas and zines. Ruinous postal rates don't help either. For me to send anything to the USA at the lowest increment of postage (up to 30 grammes weight) will cost \$1.27. International mail is completely out of the question, as the first increment is now \$2.56. Domestic postage is 90 cents. Each January, Canada Post jacks up the rates by 5 cents in each category for the first increment. They now consider themselves a parcels and advertising business.

There still are fan-run conventions. Calgary's annual readercon When Words Collide is capped at 750 members plus volunteers and guests, so say about 1,000 attending. A good time is had by all. (Details at www.whenwordscollide.org)

When my zine *OPUNTIA* was print-only, the mailing list was just under 100. Now it is a pdf zine available at either www.efanzines.com or www.fanac.org. The former site has a log of zine downloads at www.ftldesign.com/logs/efanzines. I note that *OPUNTIA* now gets a hundred or more downloads per week. Unfortunately I only have one regular loccer, and if Lloyd Penney is run over by a bus, I'll be out of luck. But at least I know people are reading me, even if they don't loc.

If Lloyd is eaten by a bear,
 most of us will be out of luck.

— JTM

The Fanac site, for those not aware of it, has thousands of fanzines from the 1930s to date. A boon to fanhistorians. The Efanazines site has an automatic email notification service to let you know about new zines uploaded there.

My advice to Worldcon committees is to just get it over with and rename the Hugo Awards as the Politically Correct Awards. To be honest, I don't see the problem. Canada's science fiction awards use thematic names, such as the Aurora (anglophone), Borealis (francophone), and Sunburst (juried). Even in

the USA, the Nebula and Dragon awards avoid the problem of cancel culture and toxic tweeters.

From: **Joy V. Smith** October 20, 2019
 8925 Selph Road, Lakeland, FL 33810-0341 USA
Pagadan@aol.com
<http://www.joyvsmith.com/>

Thanks for the reviews, articles, and info. I see that "Artificial Condition" won a Hugo for Best Novella. (I did put it on my Amazon wish list and have read it. I'm working my way through the murderbot series.) I wish I could see *Good Omens* on Amazon Prime!

Speaking of the Coast Guard, I enjoyed *Polar Melt*, which is an exciting science fiction thriller focusing on the Coast Guard and giving them credit for all the great things they do without the publicity other branches get. (Interesting the rivalry between them and the Navy Seals too.) Lots of military background, melting ice, the Russians, and The Object on the ocean floor.

I hope the Coast Guard has replaced the *Polar Star* by the time of the novel.

— JTM

The High Tech article re: WWII, baselines, etc. was interesting. And thanks to Sue Burke for her WorldCon report. And the awards lists help keep me up to date so I can recognize a few names...

Letters: I'm sorry that Joseph's anecdote about voting in Australia wasn't true, but I so enjoyed it! And I loved the yard sale sign:

Hello! My name is Inigo Montoya.
 There is a yardsale on Rufer Avenue with
 great cheap stuff.
 Prepare to buy!

Fantastic idea. Thanks for sharing this; I just shared it on Facebook, btw

From: **Hugh Lupus** November 1, 2019

Thanks for the review.
 You are right I do write in short paragraphs and no, there is no way that my books are a 'Germany uber alles' series.

Individual Nazis can be noble as in Heine's 'Le enfant perdu' if you know that poem, but the cause that they fought for is wrong.

Besides which Germany taking on the USA, USSR and B.E. and winning is not plausible to say the least!

So thanks again and look out for book 5 which is due out in the new year.

Nazis-win novels tend to fall into one of two classifications: 1) Wehraboo fanboy works (every-

thing they did was *perfect*) and 2) Angsty resistance works (those in power collaborate but people like us resist). The authors don't do the background-building to make such a result possible.

November 18, 2019

Joe has been kind enough to comment on my books and asked me to write on 'something that interests me'.

A dangerous request as many things interest me!

I could write about the frighteningly fractured politics that has infected the United States and the United Kingdom, the country of my birth.

That might be a little too controversial for my first writings here!

I could write about my adopted homeland which is New Zealand.

Now this is a subject that could be written about with passion for 'God's own country' is truly a beautiful place.

Where else could you spend the morning skiing down an active volcano and the afternoon sunning yourself on a beach fringed with verdant bush?

Perhaps for later if Joe wishes.

So let me try one thing that links to my books.

It's a game.

A game we all play and a game all authors must play and a game I've been playing since early childhood, as far back as I can remember.

It's a game called 'What if'?

It can be simple.

What if I turned left at the lights instead of right'?

It can be poignant.

'What if I never broke up with my first girlfriend'?

It can be grandiose.

'What if I was President'?

A fun game for young and old that requires no assembly instructions and no batteries.

And it's a game that I play twice in my books for I ask two "what if's".

First I ask, 'what if a part of Republican Spain was still in existence as WW2 began'?

Then 'What if ships, especially warships had personalities, could think and talk amongst themselves'.

And then the game really begins.

How do the ships see WW2?

How much is this WW2 different...and why?

See how much fun it is?

And anyone can play.....like this.

What if Lee Harvey Oswald missed?

What if the Trent affair goes Hot?

What if Lord North is replaced?

The game does not have to be long, it doesn't even have to be written down as your mind has no boundaries and the only limitation is your imagination!

I play the game every waking hour and at

my work-desk is a note book to write down my dreams.... for there are two parts to me, the [very] untrained writer and the engineer who has spent over forty years ensuring that when you fly home for Thanksgiving, you fly safely.

So there are two parts to me....like this. My name is Hugh Lupus, I'm an engineer and I write.

'Part has failed inspection for the following reasons.'

I write of costings, times and laws .

I write e-mails, many, many e-mails.

I write on forms blue, green and red.

My name is Hugh Lupus, I'm an engineer and I write.

I write for food and family, for hearth and for home.

I write because I must.

My name is Hugh Lupus, I'm an author and I write.

'And on the waters the flames burned and burned'.

I write of war, hurts, life and loss.

I write of men, many, many men.

I write of ships, grey, black and red.

My name is Hugh Lupus, I'm an author and I write.

I write for sanity and health, for joy and for fun.

I write because I must.

Joe has rightly commented that I write in an unusual manner; he is right, I do and that is the 'engineer' Hugh who has written too many reports over too many years, but the 'author' Hugh has his part also and both must share the blame!

So I leave you with my favourite game, try it, you might like it.....and you never know you might get a book or two out of it!

This writing thing can get dangerous. And here is someone from the founts that scientific sprung from. Thanks and welcome.

— JTM

From: **Timothy Lane** November 3, 2019
timothylane51@gmail.com



The disappearance of Amy Billig certainly sounds tragic. I assume there's no reason to

believe the piece of schiff who strung them along all those years had anything to do with the original crime. I also suspect that Buchanan was right. Some kidnappings do end up in long-term prisoners, but I think most are murdered fairly soon.

Another similar case to the ones you mention is that of Leslie Ann Downey, who went to visit a fair in Liverpool and met a nice couple named Ian Brady and Myra Hindley. When Leslie wanted to go home after a nice visit, she discovered how unfriendly they could be. They even took pictures of standing on her grave on the moor — which proved very handy at their trial.

And in spite of that, people like Lord Pornford (anti-pornography activist Frank Pakenham, Earl of Longford) gave Hindley sympathy and support and called for her release.

German espionage by 1944 was wretched, though according to Cornelius Ryan they did know the Allied radio signals to the French resistance for Overlord. An excellent movie on this subject is *48 Hours*, starring James Garner as an American intelligence officer taken by the Germans when he goes to meet a contact in Lisbon. They then use psychological tricks to get the location, beach names, planned date, and units. But then he figures out what happened and fakes them out, helped by the fact that the actual planned date (the movie was very well researched) was June 5.

An interesting aspect of the movie is his encounter with a German militiaman played by John Banner, prefiguring Sergeant Schultz of *Hogan's Heroes*.

Stanek's study of Hitler's career was obviously well researched. As one who has read a great deal on the history of the period, I found it very comprehensive and accurate. He mentions some very obscure attempts on Hitler's life. It's still amusing that in his later Vienna days, he relied on selling small watercolors — mostly to Jews.

It's nice to see that a couple of the Retro-Hugos went to a novel and a story I would have voted for (*Conjure Wife* and "Mimsy Were the Borogoves"). Most of the modern awards went to unfamiliar works, but amazingly the Dragon Best Military SF/F went to one I've read and possibly would have voted for, *Uncompromising Honor*.

It occurs to me, reading George W. Price's letter, that there are two kinds of conspiracy. Real ones, such as Booth's conspiracy against Lincoln, are small ones with specific goals Belief in a conspiracy like that can certainly be wrong (JFK probably wasn't killed by such a conspiracy), but generally isn't inherently paranoid. On the other hand, large conspiracies to control the world are another matter.

Those are some interesting points about Roger Taney and the Dred Scott decision. As to early black voting, in some states blacks with

sufficient property (as could women). When property requirements disappeared, so did their rights to vote.

Democracy in action (there *is* a space after "in", note).

— JTM

That was certainly an interesting yard sale sign reported by Lisa. I'm sad to say that I never saw either commercial. In 1460, a woman on the throne of England would be Margaret of Anjou, wife of Henry VI, though it would have to have been early in the year, before Edward of March and the Nevilles came back from Calais during the Wars of the Roses.

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** Nov. 17, 2019
5301 East Warm Springs Avenue, Apt. B306, Boise, ID 83716-6205 USA
robertk@cipcug.org

My thanks for Vol. 18 No. 5 (October 2019, Whole Number 107).

One of the recent trips here was to the Basque Museum and Boarding House. Very interesting. There are a lot of Basques here and the Mayor is Basque. After the tour we went across the street to an excellent restaurant for lunch where I had a first-rate tuna sandwich.

Not taking part in the HUGO's anymore there was only one award that was of interest. I was pleased to see that *The Good Place: "Janet(s)"* won Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form. I thoroughly enjoy *The Good Place*. But it's about time for it to come to an end.

Sue Burke: Thank you for the 2019 Worldcon report. Being ¼ Irish I would like to have gone to it. Finances and not being able to be on a plane for the necessary time to get to Dublin made it impossible to attend. I'm glad to know that it was an enjoyable experience. I went to the BBC site you indicated and enjoyed it. If he's correct then we all are not here. ☺

Timothy Lane: I quite agree that there are conspiracies. I disagree with your comment about no White Slaves in the colonies. There were White Slaves in the colonies prior to and during the African Slave Trade. I had two excellent books on the subject that did not make it here when I moved. *They Were White and They Were Slaves: The Untold History of the Enslavement of Whites in Early America* by Michael Hoffman and *White Cargo: The Forgotten History of Britain's White Slaves in America* by Don Jordan and Michael Walsh. Your observation about "Slav" and "slave" is well made. I remember many years ago reading a statement by Thomas Sowell that that the word "slave" was derived from "Slav" who he said were slaves much longer than Blacks were in our country.

Michael A. Hoffman II is a notorious Holocaust Denier.

George W. Price: Good comment about

the African kings who sold slaves. If reparations (a misuse of the word in this case) are to be considered for people who were never slaves in this country, then the history of slavery should be covered.

Lloyd Daub: Thank you for the mention of the book *A Republic If You Can Keep It* by Neil Gorsuch. I'll probably purchase it.

Taras Wolansky: I think that the interbreeding between Neanderthals and *Homo sapiens* was massive regardless of the size of the populations involved. Otherwise how do all persons with European ancestry have Neanderthal DNA? On a somewhat related side issue, the December issue of *Discover Magazine* has an interesting article about parasites. There are certain louse lineages on living people that carry "DNA from the lice that lived on Neanderthals and other extinct hominins." "The study also identified lice that diverged some 2 million years ago—thought to be parasites that evolved on an even more distant, as yet unknown hominin relative." "We think that means we'll see many more instances of contact between Neanderthals and modern humans..." Here's one that should get us all scratching: "More than 430 species of insects and other parasites live on, in and off people." ☺

So it looks like the Gnarly Man could have had children. And shared lice, too.

— JTM

From: **Lloyd Penney** November 18, 2019
1706-24 Eva Road, Etobicoke, ON
M9C 2B2 CANADA
penneys@bell.net
<http://lloydpenney.livejournal.com/>

Thank you for *Alexiad* 107. My struggle to catch up with things appears to have become a regular thing, as I am now quite behind on a lot of things. You'd think I'd have more time, but... My quest for employment continues, but so much in the way of qualifications is demanded in exchange for a wage far below a wage you could live on, and even with a series of excellent interviews, I have nothing at this point. So, with the advice of my financial advisor, I have applied for and am receiving my federal pension, a pittance, but better than nothing. I guess I am semi-retired.

Our fanpublishing efforts were not for naught, but as said, there are no young faneds nipping at our heels. With national awards now almost totally focused on professional efforts, even the fan awards, and online fans I don't know getting the attention, I can see our own personal fandoms dying. I pray I am wrong. Ditto the fan-run cons; ours here are dying, but there is great dissatisfaction with the pro-run cons. Yet, there will soon be pro-run con attendees who will never have suspected that their predecessors actually ran their own conventions. Have we grown that old?

There was a pro-run con in Louisville in November, GalaxyCon. It was said to have had 25,000 attendees. All-weekend tickets (yes, they look at it as "tickets") were \$60. The only author guest was Jody Lynn Nye.

A worldcon in a TARDiS... that's great idea. There's more than enough rooms to book for as long as you need it, plenty of function space, and with a tweak of wibbly-wobbly time, you can get to every panel you want to go to... or, every panel, and still be back home for work on Monday. I love the fact that the world is hosting Worldcons, but it makes it impossible for us to afford to go. Now, we are at the point where even Worldcons held in the US, we can't go to them. With the abuses of power by US Customs and ICE, and the fact that any person with non-American citizenship is subject to search, seizure and imprisonment without explanation or appeal, we refuse to cross the border.

My loc... Yvonne is now firmly re-retired, although she does talk from time to time about getting another short-term assignment. All of the interviews I had yielded nothing for me, but the resumes continue to stream out. Because of my work as an editor/proofreader with *Amazing Stories* magazine, I have done the same work with two books, *Captain Future in Love* by Allen Steele, and *Cold Comfort* by Nancy Kilpatrick. I am hoping this is my next direction as far as work and SF goes.

It's the middle of the afternoon, the snow is flying outside my window, about a month earlier than it usually does. (Can't tell me climate change and global warming/cooling doesn't exist...) And, my eyes are shutting, as if I didn't get about 8 hours of sleep last night. This is becoming a real concern, but it is mostly from the fact that we don't get enough exercise, and we don't want to go out in the cold. So, I will wrap up, and see if I can find something more strenuous to take up the rest of the day. Thank you for this issue, and we shall see you with the next.

And I am having knee problems, which makes me not want to walk, which makes me put on weight.

— JTM

From: **George W. Price** November 25, 2019
4418 N. Monitor Avenue, Chicago, IL
60630-3333 USA
price4418@comcast.net

October *Alexiad*:

In "Horse News" Lisa describes seeing slot machines at a race track, and says, "The machines raise my hackles. I cannot help finding them repulsive and wondering if it is really good for mental health to sit in this dim lighting and focus on mere machines."

Right on! Back in 1954 I stayed overnight in Reno on my way to the WorldCon in San Francisco via Greyhound. I noticed people playing

slots in the bus station. Their expressions did not look like they were having fun. Instead they looked uniformly grim and compulsive. That sight reinforced my aversion to gambling.



The gamers at the Red Mile could have gone up sometime and looked at the race. It was like there were two different populations there with no other connection than being in the same place. At least it made the admission to the track free.

Taras Wolansky has a piece titled "Gender and the Hugo Awards." I take no exception to what he says, but the title inspires a question: Why has "gender" largely replaced "sex"?

Until relatively recently, the biological division between male and female was called "sex," while "gender" was almost exclusively a grammatical term.

For example, in Spanish every noun has gender, either masculine, requiring the article "el," or feminine, requiring "la." This applies equally to nouns referring to sexless things or concepts, such as "el monte" (the mountain), "la mesa" (the table), and "el estado" (the state). There seems to be no rule governing which gender a sexless thing falls into. (And don't get me started on the gender peculiarities of German.)

So how did it happen that in English we now commonly speak of "gender" for biological sex? E.g., there is hardly any more sex discrimination; it is all gender discrimination. I suspect it has to do with the adoption of the phrase "having sex."

Circa 1940, when I was approaching puberty and learning about such matters, people never had sex. Leaving aside obscene and vulgar terms, which haven't changed much, men and women engaged in sexual intercourse (the standard formal phrase), had sexual relations, made love, went to bed together, and slept together. But nobody ever "had sex." That locution did not appear until maybe the Sixties or Seventies.

Why “having sex” came into vogue I do not know. My guess is that it was due to the so-called Sexual Revolution — perhaps it seemed to be a more frank and explicit way to discuss the subject without puritanical euphemisms.

I speculate that as “having sex” became the common way to denote sexual intercourse, it then seemed more convenient to avoid using “sex” in regard to relationships between men and women other than actual coitus. So instead we have adopted “gender.” This does avoid confusion, but still seems very odd to my ancient ears.

The way I would put it is: “gender” applies to things, “sex” to people.



SHAKE WELL BEFORE TAKING

Timothy Lane comments on the possibility that Doc Smith carried the Lensman series farther than he originally intended. Tim says, “Grant noted similarly that after a certain point, each Lensman book could have ended the series.”

No, in this case we have Doc’s own word that from the start he planned the entire series, *Galactic Patrol* through *Children of the Lens*. In his essay “The Epic of Space” in Lloyd Eshbach’s 1947 book *Of Worlds Beyond* [still available from Advent; visit adventpub.com, or contact me], Doc explicitly said that in order to make it plausible that Kimball Kinnison would willingly go into the hyper-spatial tube at the grand climax in *Children of the Lens*, he planted seemingly minor information in the earlier stories. I presume he meant the well-known rule that “A Lensman always goes in.”

Doc did major revising, but mostly at the beginning of the series. For book publication he not only wrote new stories, he revised “Triplanetary” to make it conform. For instance, Roderick Kinnison is a major character in *First Lensman*. He is first mentioned (very briefly) in “Triplanetary” — but in the original 1934 *Amazing Stories* serial (which I have perused but did not read in detail) he is not surnamed Kinnison. That had to change. I presume Doc chose to fit “Triplanetary” into the first book of the series mainly because it covers the invention of the inertialess drive.

I think that statement of Grant’s applies more to the Skylark series.

Lloyd Daub argues that “the real purpose of prison is neither punishment nor rehabilitation (although either happening on the side is fine with me). The purpose is to protect society from predators, whether they are violent or not.”

Quite so. Lately we’ve heard a lot of complaining about “excessive incarceration.” It has occurred to me that we could easily relieve this: Just bring back the lash. Let flogging be the standard punishment for most crimes short of murder or treason.

There would need to be humane limits, of course. Use a broad, flat strap that hurts like hell but does not injure — if it draws blood, you’re doing it wrong. Maybe use a machine that is adjustable to hit a big strong man much harder than a small delicate woman. That needs a lot of thought.

If this sounds sadistic, just ask yourself which you personally would prefer: horrendous pain that’s over in a few minutes, or being separated from family, job, and society for years.

However, flogging has the very serious drawback that it does nothing to solve Mr. Daub’s problem: how to keep predators separated from society.

The only answer I have is that after a criminal has taken enough whippings that we can justly conclude that he isn’t going to reform, he must be put away for life. We would still have prisons, but they would hold only those convicted of murder or other really atrocious crimes, and “habitual criminals” who have shown that flogging hasn’t taught them anything.

Of course, if we are willing to have the death penalty, we could do without prisons entirely. The most atrocious crimes would be punished by death on the first offense (so there wouldn’t ever be a second offense), and habitual criminals would be executed after several floggings proved ineffectual. That seems a bit extreme, and I suspect that most of those who complain about excessive incarceration would not be enthusiastic about such an alternative.

Hence, the floggings in *Starship Troopers* (1959; NHOL G.140). 1

discusses some other considerations of that in *Heinlein’s Children*. Everyone who does not already have a copy should get one from George.

Sue Burke catches me out for suggesting that as a compromise on vaccination, the law should allow the parents of an unvaccinated child to be sued if their kid infects someone else. As she rightly points out, this works only if we know which unvaccinated child caused the infection.

Class-action suits against all anti-vaxxer parents don’t seem practical. So it looks like we’ll have to go with, at a bare minimum, requiring schools and daycare centers to turn away unvaccinated children. More likely, we just have to accept that the right to free exercise of religion has its limits (like all other rights), and vaccination must be compulsory for all children.

Ms. Burke also favors us with an appallingly long list of unjust disabilities that women were legally subjected to until very recently.

One was that “Female flight attendants were fired at age 32 or if they got married or put on weight and stopped looking sexy.” Yes, the ending of that is why they are now “flight attendants” instead of “stewardesses,” and may be of either sex.

We can imagine an alternate history in which, back around 1930 when airlines were getting started, the operators made a different choice, and patterned airline service after railroads. They would have cabin service run by the Pullman Company, with all the attendants being black men called “air porters.” And when you got off the plane you tipped them. When the Civil Rights revolution came along, would whites have demanded a chance at those jobs? Or would it have been considered sufficient if the jobs were opened up to black women?

I have thought that if feminists wanted to memorialize men who inadvertently helped the cause of female equality, the first two monuments should be for James Watt and Samuel Colt.

James Watt made the steam engine practical, kicking off the Industrial Revolution. Steam power enabled women to operate production machinery without needing much physical strength. A woman could run a powered loom just as well as a man could. This made it much easier for women to earn enough to be fully self-supporting, and therefore much less dependent on men.

Samuel Colt’s invention of the revolver (replacing big and clumsy single-shot muzzle-loading pistols) made it much more practical for a woman to fight off a man without having to match male size and strength. The “equalizer,” as it was aptly called, thus made women far less dependent on male protectors.

Ms. Burke concludes, “The past was a different country. It had Forbidden Zones.” So

it did. And getting rid of those zones has by and large been a very good thing.

However, even very good things can be carried too far. I can think of at least one job where excluding women still makes very good sense. That is combat infantry.

I won't try to defend that assertion now, but I will say that my reasons have nothing to do with women lacking courage or fighting spirit, and much to do with both physical strength and avoiding radical changes in our customs of sexual modesty. If anyone wants me to enlarge on that, I will be glad to, but for now this letter is already long enough.

For relevant discussion on the problem of women in combat arms, read Martin van Creveld's *Pussycats: Why the Rest Keeps Beating the West* (2016).

—JTM

From: **Sue Burke** November 29, 2019
5415 N. Sheridan Road, Apt. 1711,
Chicago, IL 60640-1971
sue@sue.burke.name
sueburke.site
semiosispax.com

Lisa, you were brave to face not just spiders but your regret for hunting down a spider. They don't intend to be our adversaries, and they're hopelessly outgunned, poor things. As for finding something Spanish, ceramics was a good choice. I brought some home with me from Spain and display them in my new home proudly – and with a touch of homesickness.

Lloyd Daub, thank you for buying my book, and I hope you enjoy it. In a previous issue, it was mentioned that *Semiosis* has been referred to as *Symbiosis*, an understandable error. Recently, I've seen *Interference* called *Indifference*, which is harder to appreciate.

That sounds like Randall Garrett's SF/Gilbert&Sullivan parody, "I've Got a Little List" (*F&SF*, November 1953), where he discussed certain obsessions of SF writers. He labeled Theodore Sturgeon as being obsessed with "synergy" when "syzygy" would have been more appropriate, though either term could have been said to apply.

I'm not afraid of most spiders, so I can't claim bravery for facing one. I killed the black widow without risking getting close to her. I actually have a certain fondness for the little critters and find them interesting.

— LTM

Joe asks if we visited the South Pole Inn while we were in Ireland. Alas, no, we didn't have time – we visited nearby Dingle instead

– but our tour guide delivered a few stories about Tom Crean. For those of you who weren't on the tour bus, Crean was a heroic Antarctic explorer in the early 1900s who later retired to run a pub in his native County Kerry.

<http://www.southpoleinn.com/>
See An Unsung Hero: Tom Crean – Antarctic Survivor (2000, 2009; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 1 #4) by Michael Smith.

Speaking of Worldcon, it was a pleasure to meet you, Taras Wolansky.

Joe also asks if there's been a paradigm shift that has rendered fanzines irrelevant. I know that a paradigm shift has meant that many of the publishing skills of my youth will never get me paid work again. For that matter, my husband's computer skills are constantly outdated. As Wonderland's Red Queen said, "it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place."

Or, as Barry N. Malzberg wrote in the 1980s, "The effects of a changed technology upon us will be more profound on us than change brought about by psychological or social pressure. ... Lasting, significant change, science fiction says, is uncontrollable and coming in uncontrollably; regardless of what we think or how we feel, we have lost control of our lives."

Nonetheless, I go on living, and these last two months have been busy. I launched a novel, am rewriting (for the seventh time!) another novel, had minor surgery to release a "trigger thumb," attended Windycon and had a grand time, and I got laryngitis and couldn't talk for two days, which amused my husband far too much.

Best wishes to all for the season and the coming year. We're about to find ourselves one-fifth into the 21st century. I'm not sure how I imagined it would be, but I'm pretty sure I didn't think it would be like whatever this is.

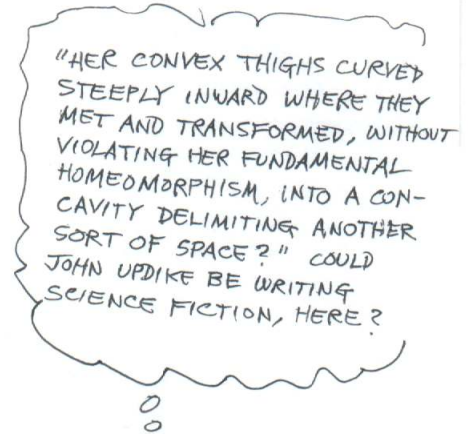
From: **Lloyd Daub** November 29, 2019
6535 W. English Meadows Drive D205,
Greenfield, WI 53220-3995 USA
ldaub@wi.rr.com

Hectic times here too. Not helped by eye-strain from too much computer time. So *Alexiad* and LOCing were delayed to near the deadline [smile].

Reviewer's Notes: I hear you on the difficulties of getting people to meet. My professional library organization went belly-up because we were a paper-pencil group in a dot-something climate. And even our efforts to join the 20th Century and meet by speaker phone failed to get a quorum. This despite the fact that the primary purpose of the thing was to be the continuing education provider for Marquette University Library, UW-Milwaukee Library, and the Milwaukee Public Library. The group could not get people on the board of directors, or on committees, or to attend the CE sessions. The giant libraries funding us were

not interested in 'incentivizing' their employees to participate. Such groups depend on a dynamic executive director, and we could not hire one. All SF groups also depend on a dynamic leader. So do political parties and organized religions.

And the dynamic leader is disliked for being "bossy".



Anyway, I suspect that SF will be back once a dynamo shows up. The field has had these slumps before. It's social climate change [smile].

Buying and Not Buying: Lisa, I have seen the Q&A section of many manufactured products on Amazon dot com, and often someone will ask about country of origin. They get an answer. I assume a CTRL-F on any product web page will help you see if China is mentioned.

George Price LOC: Thank you for the reminder about Doc Smith not quite getting the science of his coldbloods right. I guess the solution for an author is to be as non-scientific as possible. Not un-scientific, non-scientific. Avoid it. Like the notes I heard of once on a Star Trek script, where the screenwriters' careful series of orders to turn the *Enterprise* around were struck out, and "Reverse course!" substituted. I think in my own writings I only mention the environmental needs of the coldbloods, not the details. But now I will double check.

The “careful series of orders” was, I understand, two pages of dialogue. Stopping the action for that would have been realistic but not dramatic.

— JTM

Deadline met. Until next time, good health to all involved with *Alexiad*.

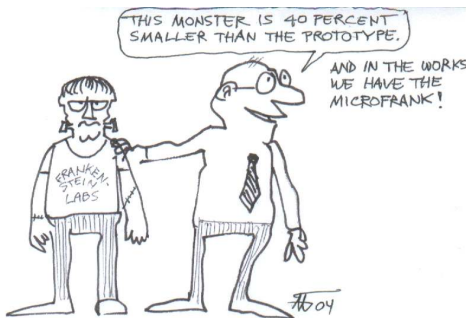
From: **Taras Wolansky** December 1, 2019
Post Office Box 698, Kerhonkson, NY
12446-0698 USA
twolansky@yahoo.com

Thank you for the October 2019 issue.

I was going to write something about the various conventions I have attended recently but, as usual, the time got away from me, and I’m doing my loc at the last minute.

One thing I’ll mention briefly is that, for the last two Capclaves, I’ve been affably crossing swords with James Morrow.

This year, I was attending one of his panels, when I pointed out how odd it is that we go on talking so much about how Galileo was placed under house arrest by the Catholic Church 400 years ago. Yet thousands of biologists were persecuted, some to death, a little over 80 years ago by Communists in the Soviet Union (because Darwinism is incompatible with Marxism). After the panel, I overheard Morrow checking with another panelist the name of one of the martyred Darwinists. Perhaps I opened his eyes a little bit.



The bit where Trofim Denisovich (i.e., Lysenko) ended a speech on his theories by saying it had been approved by the Central Committee of the Party, and the formerly skeptical biologists responded with tumultuous applause, says a lot about the relationship between science and the Soviet State.

Sue Burke (Dublin WorldCon report): “The auditorium held only 2,000, so events there required wristbands to get in”. From what I saw, the wristbands turned out to be a waste of time, as there were plenty of empty seats. Except for the Hugos, I think, which I

didn’t attend. (I’ve boycotted the Hugo ceremony since the Two Hours Hate in 2015.)

“I wanted to get a wristband for the Hugo awards, but the queue was enormous and located outside ... during a cold, windy rainstorm”. An example of the way the Dublin concom consulted its own convenience, not the members’. They also made people who bought food in the main hall eat outside.

I stood in line outside several times, picking up wristbands for friends when practicable. It wasn’t always raining, but it was always cold.

I caught academic GOH Jocelyn Bell Burnell on one panel in the overflow venue, a multiplex located above the vast, echoing spaces of what appeared to be an aborted shopping mall. This was about a half hour’s walk from the convention center. If you didn’t want to walk, the convention was happy to direct you to the tram station. Where you could buy your own tickets, which were not covered by your membership.

The panel itself reminded me of a late night TV commercial. “Diversity hiring in STEM is wonderful, Fred!” “No, no, Bill. Diversity hiring in STEM is super wonderful!” If I’d had the chance, I would have told them it’s not 1955 any more. Institutions are leaning over backwards to hire women and minorities, with the inevitable effect that “diversity hire” has become a euphemism for “second rate”.

I actually did make a one-word contribution to the panel. One of the panelists was talking about research which showed women would apply for a position if they met one hundred percent of the posted requirements, while men would if they met twenty percent. “Sixty”, I interjected. (I had read about the research, too.) “Sixty”, the panelist corrected herself.

Review of Douglas Preston’s *The Lost City of the Monkey God*: “Preston discusses in detail of the immunological problem. ... The indigenous population [of Mesoamerica] suffered over 90% death rates.”

Preston treads very delicately on this point, I recall. It’s dangerous to your career to write anything that seems intended to reduce white guilt. That Native Americans were merely paying the price for thousands of years of isolation from the plagues of the Old World is not “useful” history.

Tim Lane: According to Wikipedia, blacks with property never lost the right to vote in New York State, as they did, for a couple of decades before the Civil War, in the more culturally southern states of New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Snopes quotes a historian, indicating that George Price was right to say that the vast majority but not all African slaves were purchased from Africans:

Some independent slave merchants did in fact stage raids on unprotected African villages and kidnap and enslave Africans. Most professional slave traders, however, set up bases along the west African coast where they purchased slaves from Africans in exchange for

firearms and other goods.

George W. Price: See comments to Tim Lane on the African slave trade. If a captain had fighting men but no cash, staging a slave raid of his own might be a (risky) way to raise the necessary capital to get started in the slave trade for real.

“Should ... [slavery] reparations be paid by the descendants of those African kings who actually captured and sold the slaves?” When Pres. Clinton visited Africa and apologized for the slave trade, the local leader schooled him on the subject, pointing out there was plenty of guilt on both sides of the Atlantic.

Sue Burke: Due to my improvident habit of writing my *Alexiad* loc at the last possible moment before the deadline — it’s past 5 AM as I write this — I will probably have to postpone a detailed response to your comments about putative legal privileges of men in the U.S. circa 1970.

A general observation would be that the absence of a special protection or quota for women does not constitute a legal privilege for men. The reasoning here seems to resemble the assertion one sometimes hears, that the absence of a racial quota constitutes racial discrimination.

I might also mention that I know with absolute certainty that Columbia University accepted women in 1970 — because a bunch of them lived on my floor in Carman Hall, the freshman dorm. If I remember correctly, they were in the engineering school. However, if Columbia had not accepted women, that would still not constitute a legal privilege for men.

I remember reading a commentary on Marilyn French’s *The Women’s Room* (1977). One of the points she raises as proof that women were marginalized at Harvard was that the women’s restroom was in the basement, and she goes on about how ignored that made them. The commentator had been there at the same time and could confirm that the women’s room was in the basement. Next to the men’s room. The toilets were a later addition to the facilities.

AL du Pisani: I didn’t get very far into it, but Rebecca Roanhorse’s Hugo-nominated novel struck me as rather like a below-average entry in Patricia Briggs’ “Mercy Thompson” series. Now, if Briggs’ name were Littlefeather ...

Review of Andrew Stanek’s *How to Kill Hitler: A Guide for Time Travelers*: “Reading this book would make one think we live in a very low-probability timeline, given the inhuman luck with which the Führer escaped death time and again.”

In J.R. Dunn’s *Days of Cain* (1997), the time police are kept busy foiling attempts on

Hitler's life. Dunn's argument is that the memory of the Holocaust will reverberate down the ages, preventing similar events in the future. I suspect he is being over-optimistic.

I would think that you of all people would remember the Holodmor.

— JTM

Rodford Edmiston ("The Joy of High Tech"): Audio aircraft detectors (in World War II) are something I never heard of before.

"The [Yellowstone] region is slowly returning to the way it was before Europeans found it." But not the way it was before Native Americans found it? I guess that's impossible, until we learn how to clone extinct mammals.

From: **AL du Pisani** December 2, 2019
945 Grand Prix Street, Weltevredenpark 1709, REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
du.pisani@kilos40.co.za

South Africa partake of the three main sporting World Cups – Football (Soccer), Cricket and Rugby. We have no hope in Soccer – Rarely get into the tournament, and never got out of the pool stages, as far as I can remember. In Cricket, we have a record that we will get out of the pool stages, but will get eliminated in the knockout stages, usually in some memorable way. As far as I can remember, the best we scored was third.

And then there is the Rugby World Cup. The problem, as I overheard at work, is that sometimes we win it. So you tend to be overoptimistic, just to watch it all crumble, like the time that we got beaten by Japan. Never got out of the pool stages, that year.

This year we had a decent team, but my more experienced Rugby watching friends noted, not an outstanding team. And we lost the initial match – a bad omen, as so far, no team who lost a match in the pool stages had ever won the tournament. It was against New Zealand, a country which tends to produce consistently good teams. I was also informed much later, that we had been suffering from bad refereeing. A comment I would usually take as sour grapes, if it were not that it was a consistent issue in the early matches, so much so that an official inquiry into refereeing was announced.

And, as my friend noted, New Zealand tend to benefit much more often from bad refereeing calls, so much so that he claims that New Zealand are always playing on the out-right illegal edge, and not the more benign dubious edge.

Anyway, the tournament continued, with some major surprises – Such as when Japan beat Ireland, and then became their pool's top team, advancing into the knockout stages for the first time ever. And was then eliminated

by South Africa, but that is another story. The next major upset was when England eliminated New Zealand, setting up a final against South Africa. See, South Africa had been winning all of their matches after the initial loss, although not playing spectacular Rugby.

Up to the final, I had been watching snippets of matches, at work, because the tournament was only broadcast on pay TV. With the national team reaching the final, the cash strapped SABC managed to negotiate a deal by which they could broadcast the final, and so I could watch it.

England went into the match the favorites. And they had some bad luck, such as when one of their players was involved in an accidental encounter with another England player, and had to retire hurt, in the first two minutes of the match. But the South African defense was rock solid, and they could not break through. This was shown late in the first half, where England went on the attack near the South African goal line, managed an incredible 25 phases of play, and in the end could only force a penalty, scoring three points.

It looked as if this games was going to follow the two previous finals where South Africa was involved – All points will be scored by kicking penalties. And then South Africa managed to score a try. (Which was not ruled invalid – that happened on a previous occasion.) At that stage South Africa was reasonably well ahead. And then they scored another try – I could see how the guy that received the ball could see that he was in trouble with a couple of England defenders closing in, look around and see that he is without support, and then trying his luck, and scoring.

That put the match out of reach for England – but it was still a shock when the cameras turned away from the match for a moment, to show the engraver as he finished inscribing South Africa's name on the trophy. Not hubris, as the match ended a couple of minutes later without the score changing.

In some ways I feel this is a bigger result than 1995, but I also fear that it may be the last time I'll see a South African team winning a World Cup.

The big governmental entities are still in bad shape – The SABC had to choose between paying their employees or suppliers earlier this year, and are still in line for a large loss, begging for a government handout. (They paid the employees, and the government is not interested.)

SAA has not had a profitable year since 2006. They recently had a strike where personnel was demanding an 8% increase, when the organization offered 5.9% – As far as I can see it ended in humiliation for the unions, as they had to accept the 5.9%. But it allowed the minister for Public Enterprises to announce that the government was not going to give SAA another handout, and is in fact thinking of such radical restructuring as selling off the national airline – something inconceivable five years ago.

We have Commission of Enquiry upon Commission of Enquiry, where a lot of malfeasance in state owned enterprises have been documented. One person has had criminal charges brought against them so far – we are expecting a lot more.

But the big black hole of state-owned enterprises has been Eskom. Eskom has a new CEO – a white guy approached after 27 black guys reportedly said no. I know a guy working for Eskom – And he says that the only way forward is going to require loadshedding – Working power stations will have to be shut down so that deferred maintenance can be done. Selling that is going to be a big deal.

There is also other issues – South Africa has been in drought for the last couple of years. The position in the Western Cape is much better. In the Northern Cape, on my mother's farm, they have not had more than 5 mm of rain this year. After last year, where they also had significantly less rain than normal. The government has announced drought aid some time ago, but none of the money has reached the farmers so far – it is suspected to have been stolen by government employees.

I have started work on a new project at work, making use of new tools and development environments. It is nice learning new things. It can be enormously frustrating to read the same twenty pages of help, which does not describe your issue exactly, nor have a possible solution which seems to fit in with what and how you are doing things, but which is still the only help you have found. And it can be glorious if you get something working as you want.

I am tired, and looking forward to my year end holiday – I plan to meet up with most of my family, and relax.

I hope that you are well, and can always find something new to read.

Coincidentally, I also plan to meet up with some of my family for this year-end holiday. They are very thick on the ground around my birthplace.

— JTM

WAHF:
Martin Morse Wooster, with various items of interest.
Cathy Palmer-Lister, with thanks.

The key to all questions fannish...



FEAR AND LOATHING ON THE WAY HOME

. . . we were halfway to Tucson, on the edge of the desert, when the drugs began to take hold. I remember saying something like, "I feel a bit lightheaded, maybe you should drive . . ." And suddenly there was a terrible roar all around us and the sky was full of what looked like huge bats, all swooping and screeching and diving around the car, which was going about a hundred miles an hour with the top up to Tucson. And a voice was screaming, "Holy Jesus! What are these goddamn animals?"

Then it was quiet again. "What the hell are you yelling about?" my attorney muttered, staring out into the rain. We were on the road to Tucson where my attorney said he could score us some *truly righteous* grass. We had scored \$500 in cash back in Phoenix, most of which was already spent on extremely dangerous drugs. The trunk of the car looked like a mobile police narcotics lab.

We had already sampled most of them, and now it was time for a long snort of ether. There is nothing in the world more helpless and irresponsible and depraved than a man in the depths of an ether binge.

No point in mentioning those bats, I thought. The poor bastard will see them soon enough. I hit the brakes and aimed the Great Red Shark toward the shoulder of the highway.

Then one of the bats flew down and slammed hard into the side of the convertible. As I faded into darkness I thought, *Now he'll believe me.*

These bats must have had extraordinary powers, because one of them had turned itself into a young woman. She was sitting on the window ledge and the sun was streaming in behind her. It was far too early for any man to awaken, much less without some drugs to cushion the shock of being blasted into reality.

"Good morning," she said. "Do you know how to get a bird to notice you, short of being a crumb? I wonder if they do notice anything except food and eggs. Do they ever take a deep breath for the sheer joy of breathing?" She dumped the crumbs.

"I want my attorney," I said. If I was in some little jail in a town in the middle of nowhere I wanted legal representation.

"He's two rooms over. You two were badly hurt, and all those unpleasant things in the trunk were no help. We got rid of them for you."

A day with no drugs!? I had died and gone to some fascist rural hell. The woman babbled on about breakfast, and then got up to go.

When she was gone I went to the window. It was a typical insane meaningless rural day. But then two children flew by.

I blinked and looked again. Maybe they had discarded our drugs because they had some substances even more powerful. It might be worth staying around. And with that I went to look for Dr. Gonzo . . .

— Not by Hunter S. Thompson or Dr. Raoul Duke

Co-Editors: Lisa & Joseph Major
 Co-Publishers: Joseph & Lisa Major
 Writers, Staff: Major, Joseph, Major, Lisa

This is issue **Whole Number One Hundred and Eight (108)**.

Art: What we are mainly looking for is small fillos. Your fillo will probably be scanned in and may be reused, unless you object to its reuse.

Contributions: This is not a fictionzine. It is intended to be our fanzine, so be interesting.

Material in *Alexiad* is copyright © 2019. All rights reserved. Upon publication, all rights revert to the original contributor, but we reserve the right to use any item more than once, unless otherwise specified by the contributor. All letters sent to *Alexiad* become the property of the publishers. Any material by the editors is available to other fanzines if they provide proper credit and send a copy.

Available for The Usual (letter of comment, trade, contribution). Sample issue available upon request. Back issues \$1; subscription \$10/year. *Alexiad* is also available by email in Adobe Acrobat .pdf format.

ALEXIAD

c/o Lisa & Joseph Major

1409 Christy Avenue

Louisville, KY 40204-2040 USA

jtmajor@iglou.com

<http://efanzines.com/Alexiad/index.htm>